

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO CINCPAC PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 014355

EXDIS MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 1140 ACTION SECSTATE 21 JANUARY.

QUOTE

S E C R E T BANGKOK 1140

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS SECDEF AND CINCPAC

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MILI, TH

SUBJ: US FORCE LEVELS IN THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 1045

SUMMARY: DCM CALLED ON GENERAL KRIT SIWARA ON URGENT BASIS
JANUARY 21 AND BRIEFED KRIT ON CAMBODIAN AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE
SECURITY SITUATIONS. DCM EXPRESSED OUR STRONG CONCERN OVER IDEA
OF MEETING AT THIS TIME TO DISCUSS US FORCE LEVELS IN THAILAND
AS PROPOSED BY FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN. KRIT STRONGLY
AGREED THAT NO SUCH MEETING SHOULD BE HELD AND SAID HE
WOULD TAKE MATTER UP WITH CHARUNPHAN AND PRIME MINISTER.
KRIT ALSO PLEDGED SUPPORT FOR EXPANDED US AIRLIFT TO

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CAMBODIA IF NECESSARY. END SUMMARY

1. ON JANUARY 21, DCM, ACCOMPANIED BY POMIL COUNSELOR, CALLED ON THAI ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND ACTING SUPREME COMMANDER GENERAL KRIT SIWARA. DCM BEGAN BY SUMMARIZING CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. (DCM LEFT WITH KRIT MORE DETAILED WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF SITUATION.) KRIT INTERRUPTED AT THIS POINT TO EXPRESS HIS OWN GRAVE CONCERN OVER DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMBODIA AND SVN, WHICH HE SAID THAI MILITARY WERE WATCHING VERY CLOSELY.

2. CONTINUING, DCM REFERRED TO DETERRENT EFFECT OF US PRESENCE IN THAILAND ON HANOI, CALLING ATTENTION TO SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S STATEMENTS ON SUBJECT DURING JANUARY 14 PRESS CONFERENCE. DCM THEN WENT ON TO DESCRIBE FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN'S RECENT EFFORTS TO CONVENE EARLY US-THAI MEETING TO DISCUSS US FORCE LEVELS IN THAILAND, AND ACQUAINTED KRIT WITH NEWSPAPER STORY QUOTING CHARUNPHAN AS EXPECTING NEGOTIATION TO LEAD TO AGREEMENT ON FURTHER US FORCE REDUCTIONS. HE CONCLUDED BY STRESSING THAT ANY SUCH MEETING WOULD CONVEY WRONG SIGNAL TO HANOI AT PRESENT JUNCTURE AND WOULD HAVE ADVERSE EFFECT ON OUR JOINT SECURITY INTERESTS.

3. KRIT IMMEDIATELY AGREED THAT MEETING WAS POOR IDEA. NO MATTER WHAT ITS CONTENT, PRESS WOULD BE INSPIRED TO PROBE AND SPECULATE. KRIT SAID SOME SENTIMENT WAS EMERGING AMONG THAI MILITARY, INCLUDING HIMSELF, THAT US FORCES IN THAILAND SHOULD BE AUGMENTED AT THIS POINT. HE EXPRESSED PARTICULAR CONCERN ABOUT CAMBODIA, WHICH HAD COMMON BORDER WITH THAILAND. SO GREAT WAS HIS CONCERN, HE SAID, THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY AND WITHOUT CONSULTING THAI GOVERNMENT AUTHORIZED TRANSIT OF CAMBODIAN TROOPS THROUGH CORNER OF THAILAND, WITH WEAPONS CONCEALED, AS THEY REDEPLOYED FROM ONE SECTOR OF WESTERN CAMBODIA TO ANOTHER. KRIT NOTED THAT PHNOM PENH SUPPLY SITUATION WAS CRITICAL.

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4. DCM AGREED, POINTING OUT THAT KEY ROADS HAD BEEN CUT THAT, STILL MORE SERIOUSLY, MEKONG RIVER WAS CLOSED TO CONVOYS. IN ORDER ALLEVIATE THIS SITUATION, US MIGHT SOON INITIATE MASSIVE AIRLIFT FROM THAILAND. IN ADDITION TO AMMUNITION AND OTHER CARGO, AIRLIFT WOULD INCLUDE PL 480 RICE. DISCUSSIONS HAD BEEN HELD BY EMBASSY WITH GENERAL KRIANGSAK AND WITH MINISTRIES OF COMMERCE AND

AGRICULTURE. ALL HAD AGREED THAT PL 480 RICE FOR CAMBODIA AIRDROP COULD BE REGARDED AS TRANSIT RATHER THAN IMPORT, AND THEREFORE ACCEPTABLE. GIVEN COMMON US-THAI INTEREST IN PRESERVATION OF LON NOL GOVERNMENT, DCM SOUGHT AND RECEIVED KRIT'S ASSURANCE OF HIS PERSONAL SUPPORT IF EXPANDED US AIRLIFT OPERATIONS WERE NECESSARY.

5. KRIT UNDERTOOK TO RAISE MATTER OF PROPOSED MEETING ON U.S. FORCE LEVELS WITH PRIME MINISTER SANYA AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN WHEN HE SAW THEM UPON RESUMPTION OF CABINET MEETING SAME AFTERNOON.

6. DCM, RECOGNIZING POSSIBILITY THAT EVEN AFTER KRIT'S INTERCESSION RTG MIGHT STILL DECIDE MEETING SHOULD BE HELD, SAID THAT IF SUCH WERE CASE, IT WOULD BE ESSENTIAL FORESTALL PRESS SPECULATION BY MAKING PRESS STATEMENT CLEARLY SHOWING AGREEMENT THAT NO REDUCTIONS WERE APPROPRIATE UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN INDOCHINA. HE HANDED KRIT DRAFT PRESS STATEMENT FOR USE IN THIS CONTINGENCY. KRIT UNDERSTOOD THIS, BUT REITERATED HE WOULD SEEK TO TORPEDO MEETING ON US FORCE LEVELS ENTIRELY AS PREFERRED COURSE OF ACTION.

7. MY APPOINTMENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AT 10:30 A.M. 22 JANUARY STILL ON. I HOPE KRIT WILL INTERVENE TO HAVE FORCE LEVELS REMOVED FROM CHARUNPHAN'S AGENDA.
KINTNER UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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